



The Monte Cassino Society

Furthering an interest in the Italian Campaign 1943–1945

NA15141

Winter 2010/2011

Aim

To remember and further an interest in the experiences of all who took part in the Italian Campaign.

Welcome

I hope everyone is managing to survive this dreadful winter weather. I'd almost given up on the spring flowers that arrive here in Cornwall earlier than the rest of the UK when I came across some snowdrops and early primroses in the garden which made me think perhaps Spring is not too far away after all. Here's hoping!

Paul Taylor and John Leach have been working very hard putting together our trip to Cassino in May. There are still places available for anyone wishing to join us. I am pleased to report that the National Lottery 'Heroes Return' scheme has been extended and is available to veterans, spouses and carers. Funding is available to new applicants and also those who received funding prior to April 2009. It would appear that those who travelled with us in May 2009 may well be eligible as funding for that trip was agreed prior to April 2009.

I will again be applying on behalf of any of our members wishing to return to Italy this year.

We continue to get a steady stream of new members both veterans and next generation. We also continue to get e-mails from readers of our website, often asking for help in tracing the army records of relatives. A big thank you to Stan Pearson who willingly shares his experience in this field.

This newsletter primarily features Remembrance—one of the main aims of the Society. However, we would be grateful for any items for future newsletters, anything you might like to share with members.

Judith Coote

*Daughter of the late Gerald Soady,
91st LAA R.A., 4th British Infantry
Division*

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News

Cassino 2011

The visit is from Sunday 15th to Sunday 22nd May. Flights have been booked as follows:

Manchester Flight (via Brussels)
*Depart 10.35 a.m. Arrive Naples 4.30 p.m.
Return Flight depart Naples 12.10 p.m.
Arrive Manchester at 9.00 p.m.*

Gatwick Flight
*Depart 12.10 p.m. Arrive Naples 3.45p.m.
Return Flight depart Naples 4.30 pm.
Arrive Gatwick 6.15 p.m.*

We will again be staying at the Hotel Serapo in Gaeta on half board basis.

Provisional Itinerary

Sun	Arrive Gaeta
Mon	King of Naples Palace, Caserta
Tues	TBA - open to suggestions
Wed	11.00 a.m. Ceremony at the British Cemetery, Cassino p.m. visit Abbey
Thurs	Picinisco and Abruzzo National Park
Fri	Anzio & Piana delle Orme Museum
Sat	Free
Sun	Depart Gaeta

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We do have a few additional places available and if you are interested, please contact me on 0117 961 4259 or Judith on 01503 263229 (or e.mail—addresses on final page).

The basic cost of £625 (£70 single supplement) includes flights, accommodation, coach transfer to and from the airport and day trips. It does not include travel insurance. Saga or Age Concern specialise in insurance for the more senior of us.

The Heroes Return lottery funding has been extended. The rates are £800 for veterans, £1,425 for veteran plus spouse or carer (2 people) and £2,200 for veteran, spouse and carer (3 people).

Judith is preparing a joint application for members of our party. Please contact her if you think you may be eligible.

Paul Taylor

Notice for War Widows and Widowers

The scheme administered by the MOD and the Royal British Legion to enable war widows and widowers to visit their spouses' grave or memorial overseas is still available. 100% of the cost is covered and applies to those who lost a husband or wife in service between 1914 and 1967. Those who have since remarried are equally eligible.

Veterans Week—Blackpool—June 2011

Blackpool is this year hosting Veterans Week from 21st to 26th June. The bustling seaside resort of Blackpool offers so much for adults and children and promises a memorable time for all.

Avianova Travel are offering five nights half board at The Savoy Hotel at a cost of £185.00 per person twin share.

Further details available from Avianova on tel. 0161 773 4848 or e.mail grant@avianova.co.uk

Tartan Cassino

A group of 6 members of the 3rd Battalion The Black Watch based in Fort George Barracks, Inverness are cycling from Monte Cassino to Edinburgh Castle, a distance of 1,750 miles in aid of Help 4 Heroes, The Black Watch Association, Erskine House and the Royal Regiment of Scotland Association. In just 14 days, averaging 125 miles a day, they will be cycling through four countries, Italy, Switzerland (over the Alps), France and the UK passing through Rome, Paris, London and finishing in

Edinburgh. Further details can be found on their website www.TartanCassino.com.

Remembrance Services

Once again Dave Mann, son of the late Harold Geoffrey Mann, 31st Field Reg. R.A. represented us at Chislehurst.

Dave writes -

With the untimely closure of its club house, 2010 has been a difficult year for the Chislehurst British Legion Branch members. But, whatever uncertainties may present, these old soldiers prove consistently to rise up and always come across when it comes to stepping up to the plate in memory of those who gave so much. For five years now Meridian Chapter members have been honoured to join up with our friends from Chislehurst Branch and the local community to take part in the annual Remembrance Sunday Parade. It is always good to see everyone gathered on the day, there is an indescribable camaraderie amongst all, both young and old who attend, although there is always of course a moment of sadness to note those who are no longer with us from previous years.

With daily focus constantly on Afghanistan and the terrible losses endured by our young service personnel, it would seem many more ordinary members of the public joined in the parade this year, swelling numbers to around five hundred, people seemed to appear from nowhere.

Not having the facility of a 'home base' and after some discussion, Alan Stevens-Willoughby from the RBL and myself secured agreement with the management at Meridian Chapter's regular meeting place, 'The Queens Head' that the parade would start from there. Having reached the Chislehurst Cenotaph, it took a while to accommodate all those attending alongside local dignitaries into the normally vacant and idle memorial—this was reflected by the fact that people had to share the orders of service as there were not enough to go around.

As the Service drew towards its conclusion at 2 minutes to 11.00 I noted that the cold and grey sky had started to produce drops of rain, in some strange way this seemed quite poignant and by the time we were stood in silent memory the rain was falling quite

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steadily, adding further to the tranquility and solemnness of the moment.

Wreaths were laid in memory of the fallen and also on behalf of 'The Monte Cassino Society' by Meridian Members. It was a particularly pleasing moment at the end of the service when the senior Clergy approached and thanked Meridian for attending. Having paraded back to 'The Queens Head' in the now steadily falling rain, some remained to enjoy lunch whilst others went about their normal Sunday business.

Riding home in the rain on the motorway gave time for reflection, of another year almost done and another year of riding ahead. But above all, to those who gave so much to allow us the freedom to enjoy our tomorrow—We will remember them!

Dave Mann, Assistant Director Meridian Chapter Harley Owners Group



Remembrance Sunday Parade 2010
Chislehurst, Kent

News (cont)

Remembrance Services, London

Once again we attended the Field of Remembrance in Westminster. My brother Philip and I represented the Society and once again Bob Clarke attended on behalf of our veterans. Our plot was, as usual, between the Far East Veterans Association and the Russian Convoy Club, all three of which were fronted by veterans. The Duke of Edinburgh stopped and had a word with Bob as did the Dean of Westminster, The Very Reverend John Hall.

Unfortunately, due to the numbers attending this event in previous years, attendance this year was by invitation only. Normally it is a chance to meet with our members but the restricted numbers meant that fewer people than usual came to say hello.

Fortunately the rain held off until very near the end of the official party's visit when Philip and I made our way to a local hostelry where we met with Jim Knox and members of the Friends of Popski's Private Army.

Very many thanks to Bob for braving the elements to support us.



Judith



The Cenotaph service and march past was attended by the usual stalwarts—our thanks go out to them, it is no mean feat as anyone who has taken part can testify. Judith and the two Mikes were prevented from attending this year but Harry Launder, Bob Clarke, John Lewis, Deborah Hogan and Philip Soady were joined by a new member, Maureen Stringer whose late Uncle, Edward Oliver, was in the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment). Harry laid the wreath on behalf of the Society.

The British Legion continue to insist that veterans only, with carers, are permitted to march. With regard to WW2 veterans, this is getting very difficult to adhere to. Our contingent marches behind the Italy Star Association, almost as one group. Each year too, their numbers are getting smaller.

We may be few, but it is imperative that we carry on for as long as possible. As well as the main reason for our attending, the fact that the BBC give us a mention is all good publicity!

News (cont)



On Horseguards
Parade waiting for the
columns to line up



Two of our members got a mention in the 11th November edition of the **South Wales Evening Post**

'We must not forget boys who gave lives' by Gill Roberts

Skewen veteran Aubrey Evans will be one of the many standing silent to pay his respects at 11 am today.

The 89 year old said he will be wearing his poppy with pride to mark Armistice Day. Mr. Evans, from Dynevor Road, is one of the few members left of a special band of men who fought together through the war in the 132 (Welsh) Field Regiment of the Royal Welsh Artillery—the Neath and Swansea Territorials.

"It is good to remember what happened in the past," he said. "We have got to remember some of the boys who died and gave their lives for the country. But there are not many left now. I remember when there used to be dinners with 250 people. There were 150 veterans in Swansea but now I can only think of four from Swansea and no one from Neath. They have all passed away. It is important to remember them all. The people of Neath and Swansea should be very proud of their regiment."

Mr. Evans was an 18 year old working for Red Dragon Relays when he signed up for the Territorials just months before the outbreak of war. Soon he found himself defending the coastline of South West Wales from a possible

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German attack—alongside Swansea boy Harry Seccombe.

In 1942 the Territorials took part in the landings in Algeria and Tunisia, then moved on to Sicily and Italy, where they fought in the bloody battle of Monte Cassino. At the end of the war he found himself in Austria, where they released 400 Allied PoWs from a camp—and replaced them with hundreds of German prisoners.

After the war Mr. Evans returned home, got married, and spent the next quarter of a century working at BP Llandarcy.

“I remember lots of battles and that it was always wet and muddy” he said. “It does not seem as long ago as it was. I remember some things like it was yesterday. I joined when I was 18 in 1939 and I joined for the money!”

“In 1946 I came back home. I met my wife while I was on leave and we got married that year. I have three children, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. They all love to hear the stories.”

“I went to a primary school in Neath Abbey the other day to tell the children about the war. It went quite well and they asked quite a few questions which was nice. I think it is good for the youngsters to know about what happened.”

Working as an ammunition driver he said he was proud of what he had achieved with his fellow colleagues, despite the sometimes difficult conditions.

“I was happy to come home” he said. “There were times when I enjoyed it and times when it was pretty rough. We often had to travel at night between 9 pm and 3 am as we were shelled and gunned down. There were many rough times. I always felt like I was blessed and my prayers were answered. I was often told I was to give ammunition to someone and that I may not return.”

Mr. Evans said as well as attending a service at the Civic Centre in Swansea last week, he will also be going to a service in Skewen. “There is nothing going on in Skewen today, but there is a service at Carnegie Hall on Sunday,” he said. “There will not be a lot of people there, but around 30 to 40, some from the RAF and Army.”

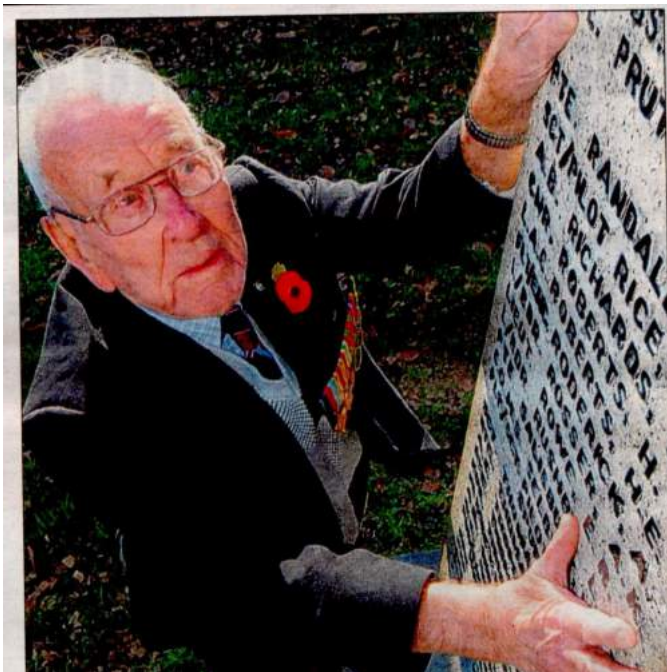
Coedffranc councillor Keith Davies said the service in Skewen is well attended each year, with many youngsters turning out.

“Aubrey is a lovely guy. He is a war veteran who is a regular at all the remembrance services,” he said.

“I was born after the war, but I always go to the remembrance service to remember those people who gave their lives for us today.”

There are a few of my family’s names on the cenotaph at Carnegie Hall.”

Gill Roberts



Aubrey Evans at the war memorial in Skewen



Harry Launder at the Swansea Cenotaph

News (cont)

LOST POST FOR THE UNFALLEN

Geoff Smith, October 2009

No memorial for you squire, no Remembrance Day
No sparse procession round the square, no pipers play.
No shuffling Councillors nor Scouts (it's a precinct anyway)
No vicar by the Cenotaph, bidding us to pray.

For you are the Unfallen, they who shall grow old
You are the Forgotten, the one the years condemn,
A blank in the official mind, medals long since sold.
At the going down of the sun, who will remember them?

No more 'Action Stations' call, the cheerful 'Aye, Aye!'
No more the urgent scramble into the Channel sky.
No more the dawn Benghazi or sand inside your eye,
No more the Sgt. Major sings no Redcaps snooping by.

For the Unfallen, they who can grow old
Youths do insult them and the jeers condemn.
A blank in the official mind, medals mouldy, old,
Ike and Monty we respect. Who can remember them?

No need for Application Form. Did you save in '39?
Did you leave school to volunteer, to smash the Siegfried Line?
How many trenches did you dig before the sirens' whine?
Did you join the L.D.V. with civvy boots ashine?

You're a nuisance, you Unfallen, you should not grow old.
A pest to the official mind, meddling you are told,
You the great unwanted, the ones we all condemn,
Winston and the beaches. Never heard of them!

No kidding. You lot were defeated by the Desert Fox,
You futile D-Day Dodgers were shirking behind rocks.
The boys in blue—a flight of tracer happy crocks,
The Navy, what a shower! We've seen 'em on the box.

A shower, you Unfallen, the ones who have grown old,
Scrounging now for benefits—no wonder we condemn.
A blank on our official mind, medals erstz gold;
Lancasters and Spitfires, what's the use of them?

No credit from the new SS for the times your feet were raw,
No-one buys you bitter if you served in Singapore.
They know about Cassino, glimpsed on the package tour,
Seen the swim-pool at Salerno where blood once soaked the shore .

Get fell out Unfallen, why did you lot grow old?
You should be forgotten, the one we all condemn
The blanks in the official mind. Medals! Records cold!
Torpedoes and Messerschmidts. Who remembers them?

No more benefits, you sods. You get your hair cut short!
Don't waste our time, for you are not our sort.
You travelled free—all that transport overground,
No bill for all that bully-beef. Each week you got a pound!

You should all have fallen, so why did you grow old?
If you expect respect from us, go and catch a cold.
You are best forgotten, the ones we all condemn.
Sign this form and clear off, third class citizen!

New Members

Mr. Ernest D. Golding: 'E' Battery, 1st Reg. Royal Horse
Artillery, 7th Armoured Brigade

Mr. Tom Long: Late Father in Royal Artillery (Bofors gunner)

Aaron Maine: Interested friend

Ms. Patricia MaGuire: Father in 17 Platoon D Company, 5th
Battalion The Northamptonshire Reg. 11 Brigade, 78th
Infantry Division

Mr. Walter D. Pritchard: Royal Corps of Signals

Mrs. Avril Robertson: Daughter of Pte. Edward Oliver,
Leicestershire Regiment, buried in Cassino Cemetery

Ms. Maureen Stringer: Niece of John McGill, Fusilier, buried
Cassino Cemetery

In Memorium

CHAPMAN Edward, Father of Diane Cross
6th Battalion, The Lincolnshire Regiment

SOADY Gerald, Father of Judith, John and Philip
91st :LAA, Royal Artillery, 4th British Infantry Division



The Monte Cassino Society

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